

Governor top vote getter in GRIC primary

[By Doug Murphy | Ahwatukee Foothills News](#)

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Voters on Gila River Indian Community went to the polls Tuesday, narrowing a crowded field of 10 candidates for Governor down to the top two, who will now face off in November's general election.

Current Gov. William R. Rhodes was the big vote getter, with unofficial results showing he received 586 votes, 33 percent, followed by Jennifer Allison-Ray with 270 votes, 15 percent. The other eight candidates brought up the rear.

It was a solid showing for a man who in June easily beat back a recall attempt.

The June 20 recall was fueled by allegations that Rhodes had unfairly fired tribal employees, including most of the department heads and the long-time community manager, during his first months in office and replaced them with people of his own choosing.

Tribal officials declined to speak on the record about the recall or Tuesday's primary election, but Rhodes wrote in an election statement that his campaign platform was to eliminate corruption, and that the tribal government was designed to provide efficient services and not be an employment program for tribal members.

Rhodes has been open to the idea of a community-wide vote on allowing construction of the South Mountain Loop 202 on tribal land, but the council has been consistently opposed to the idea.

Rhodes was elected in 2005 to the three-year term and from the beginning, his administration has battled the tribal council.

Just months after being elected, the council suspended Rhodes from office for three weeks for undisclosed reasons after receiving an internal audit of the events surrounding the firing and replacement of the department heads.

Rhodes, a U.S. Navy veteran of the Korean War, was the tribe's first volunteer fire chief. He also served nine years in law enforcement and was the tribal court's Chief Judge from 1999 until being elected governor.